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# BEFORE THE ARIZONA CORPORATION COMMISSION RECEIVED

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2010 JUL 16 P 3: 42

AZ CORP COMMISSION DOCKET CONTROL

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7 IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF ARIZONA-AMERICAN WATER COMPANY,

8 AN ARIZONA CORPORATION, FOR A DETERMINATION OF THE CURRENT FAIR

9 VALUE OF ITS UTILITY PLANT AND PROPERTY AND FOR INCREASES IN ITS

10 RATES AND CHARGES BASED THEREON FOR UTILITY SERVICE BY ITS ANTHEM

11 WATER DISTRICT AND ITS SUN CITY WATER DISTRICT.

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IN THE MATTER OF THE APPLICATION OF

13 ARIZONA-AMERICAN WATER COMPANY, AN ARIZONA CORPORATION, FOR A

14 DETERMINATION OF THE CURRENT FAIR VALUE OF ITS UTILITY PLANT AND

15 PROPERTY AND FOR INCREASES IN ITS RATES AND CHARGES BASED THEREON

16 FOR UTILITY SERVICE BY ITS

ANTHEM/AGUA FRIA WASTEWATER

17 DISTRICT, ITS SUN CITY WASTEWATER DISTRICT AND ITS SUN CITY WEST

18 WASTEWATER DISTRICT.

DOCKET NO. W-01303A-09-0343

Anizona Corporation Commission DOCKETED

JUL 16 2010

DOCKETED BY

DOCKET NO. SW-01303A-09-0343

STAFF'S INITIAL POST-HEARING BRIEF

The Utilities Division ("Staff") of the Arizona Corporation Commission ("Commission") hereby files its initial post-hearing brief in the above-captioned matter. In this brief, Staff will address the major disputed issues. On any issue not specifically addressed in this brief, Staff maintains its position as represented in its testimony.

### I. INTRODUCTION.

The Arizona-American Water Company ("Arizona-American" or the "Company") is the largest, investor-owned water/wastewater utility in the State of Arizona providing water and wastewater service to approximately 131,000 customers. It is a wholly owned subsidiary of American Water. Arizona-American operates thirteen water and wastewater districts. In July 2009,

Townsley Direct (Ex. A-3) at 1.

Townsley Direct (Ex. A-3) at 3.

Id. at 10.

28 5 Manique Direct (Ex. S-3) at 48.

Arizona-American filed for rate increases for five of its districts: Anthem Water District, Sun City Water District, Anthem/Agua Fria Wastewater District, Sun City West Wastewater District and for possible rate consolidation for all of Arizona-American's districts.

Company President Paul Townsley testified that the Company's financial position is poor and that Arizona-American has lost over \$31 million since American Water purchased the water and wastewater assets of Citizens Utilities in 2002.<sup>2</sup> According to Mr. Townsley, Arizona-American experienced a net loss of \$1.8 million in 2008.<sup>3</sup> The Company also proposed that the Commission consider state-wide rate consolidation, citing among other considerations, improved rate case efficiency, improved ability to make needed capital investments in smaller districts and a desire to bring the tariff structure of water and wastewater utilities more in line with those of other regulated utilities in Arizona.<sup>4</sup>

Staff and the Company have been able to resolve many of their major areas of disagreement. For instance, the Company in its application, using a 2008 test year, requested an overall revenue increase of \$20,628,634. The Company requested a cost of equity of 12.25 percent, with its cost of capital of 8.5 percent. While Cost of Capital is usually one of the more contested issues in rate proceedings, the Company accepted the Staff's recommended cost of capital of 7.20 percent and return on equity of 10.70 percent, which contributed to the reduction of the revenue requirement of almost \$3.6 million, resulting in an overall revenue requirement of \$16,583,067.

There are still some very significant issues that have been raised in this proceeding where disagreement exists between the parties. These issues include: the treatment of the Anthem developer refunds, the requested Infrastructure System Improvement Surcharge for the Sun City Water District, and the proposed rate design consolidation.

## II. SUMMARY OF STAFF'S REVENUE REQUIREMENT RECOMMENDATIONS.

Staff recommends a 10.7 percent<sup>5</sup> cost of equity and a rate of return of 7.20 percent.<sup>6</sup> Staff's recommendation for an overall revenue increase is \$16,003,384. Staff's recommended capital

Id.
 Id at

1 structure consists of 38.86 percent equity and 61.14 percent debt, which includes short-term debt.<sup>7</sup> 2 Staff's final revenue requirement recommendation, with a comparison of the Company's final 3 position, for each system is as follows:

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**District** 

Anthem Water

Sun City Water

Anthem/Aqua

Sun City

Wastewater

Wastewater

Sun City West

Fria Wastewater

Company

Final

Revenue

13,455,431

11,166,039

13,926,904

7,884,466

7,163,903

Company

Final

Revenue

Increase

5,962,687

1,877,910

5,292,887

1,965,520

1,500,223

Company

Percentage

82.40

20.57

61.30

33.19

26.50

**Staff Final** 

Revenue

13,420,925

11,126,179

13,668,321

7,665,720

7,137,298

**Staff Final** 

Revenue

**Increase** 

5,928,181

1,843,078

5,031,198

1,725,339

1,475,588

Staff

Percentage

79.12

19.85

58.25

29.04

26.06

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III. RATE BASE ISSUES.

Staff recommends an original cost rate base for Anthem of \$57,248,934; Sun City Water of \$28,192,680; Anthem/Agua Fria Wastewater of \$45,115,225; Sun City Wastewater of \$15,488,742; Sun City West of \$18,098,487.8 The Company waived a determination of the fair value of its property using a reconstruction cost new valuation. Hence the original cost rate base ("OCRB") and the fair value rate base ("FVRB") are the same for purposes of this application.

#### Cash Working Capital (All Districts). A.

In preparing its cash working capital, the Company performed a lead lag study. Staff and the Company disagree on the appropriate number of lag days to be covered by management expenses. The Company, in its direct testimony used 14.77 lag days for management expenses. 10 In its rebuttal, the Company adjusted the days for this expense to 11.25 lead days. 11

Manique Direct (Ex. S-3) at 48.

<sup>27</sup> Staff Final Schedules; Errata Sun City Water Schedules.

Gutowski Direct (Ex. A-17) at 3.

<sup>28</sup> Id.; Schedule LJG B-5.

Gutowski Rebuttal (Ex. A-18) at Exec. Summary IV.

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Becker Direct (Ex. S-9) at 11.

the differences between the collection of revenues and the payment of expenses and creates a cash working capital amount, which is added to or subtracted from the Company's rate base. 13 The Company uses a shared services model through which certain services are provided to it by an affiliate. Pursuant to the agreement between the Company and the service company affiliate, the Company pays for its share of services a month in advance.<sup>14</sup> Company witness Linda Gutowski

testified that the 11.25 lead days is reflective of the Company's actual lead days for payment of management fees and was the same kind of lead days used in the 2008 Working Capital calculation that was approved as part of Decision No. 71410.<sup>15</sup>

Working capital is a collective term that typically includes amounts for prepaid expenses.

working capital is to quantify the amount of cash that a company needs to operate by analyzing the

timing differentials between the period required for revenues to be realized and collected and the

Staff disagrees. Staff witnesses Gerald Becker and Garry McMurry testified that the lead/lag days should not be based on internal agreements made between the Company and its affiliate. 16 Staff is concerned that the use of an internal agreement to calculate lead/lad days may result in a situation where an unregulated affiliate may expect payments even sooner than one month in advance and expect the ratepayers to support this internal circumstance in its cash working capital calculation.<sup>17</sup> Further, a review of Decision No. 71410 indicates that it does not support the Company's position. Decision No. 71410 did not approve a lead of 11.25 days for Management expenses, but approved a lead of 3.88 days for Management Expenses. 18

Because there was no lead/lag study performed to establish the payment pattern of the affiliate service provided, Staff does not recommend the 3.88 days allowed in Decision No. 71410. Staff

Gutowski Rebuttal (Ex. A-18) at 10.

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Becker Surrebuttal (Ex. S-10) at 5; McMurry Surrebuttal (Ex. S-6) at 4.

<sup>28</sup> 

Decision No. 71410 at 30-32.

recommends that the effects of the 14.77 lag days for Management expenses (the original lag days requested by the Company) be excluded.<sup>19</sup>

## B. <u>Utility Plant in Service (Sun City)</u>.

Staff witness Becker requested that the Company address the addition of Plant 9 and Wells 9.2 and 9.3 in the Tierra Del Rio section of Sun City.<sup>20</sup> The Company requested the inclusion of \$365,579 of plant cost for its Tierra Del Rio Project, water treatment Plant No. 9, Well No. 9.2 and Well No. 9.3.<sup>21</sup> Staff accepted the Company's adjustment.<sup>22</sup>

## C. Post Test Year Plant (Sun City).

The Company requested the inclusion in plant in service of Well 5.1. Sun City Water District abandoned the old Well 5.1 in 2008 and retired this plant item in 2007.<sup>23</sup> To replace Well 5.1 the Company installed a replacement well, which was drilled in May 2008 and placed into service in December 2008. The well was in service at the time of Staff's inspection.<sup>24</sup> The Residential Utility Consumer Office ("RUCO") excluded Well 5.1 as post test year plant. However, Staff witness Dorothy Hains testified that Well 5.1 was in use and serving customers and that Staff considered Well 5.1 to be used and useful.<sup>25</sup> Staff would recommend that the RUCO exclusion be rejected and that Well 5.1 be included as plant in service.

## IV. OPERATING INCOME.

## A. Bad Debt Expense (All Districts).

Although both the Company and Staff agree that Bad Debt Expense should be normalized based on the Company's three-year experience, the Company and Staff are unable to agree on the actual amount of Bad Debt Expense that was included in the Company's original application. This difference, in turn, results in different adjustments to Bad Debt Expense in all districts.<sup>26</sup> The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Becker Surrebuttal (Ex. S-10) at 6; McMurry Surrebuttal (Ex. S-6) at 5.

Becker Direct (Ex. S-9) at 38.

Phase I, Tr. at 579:21-580:18; Ex. A-29.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Staff's Final Schedule, Sun City Water (errata).

Hains Direct, Sun City Water District Engineering Report (Ex. S-7) at 13.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Phase I, Tr. at 766:14-25, 767:1-4.

Becker Surrebuttal (Ex. S-10) at 6; McMurry Surrebuttal (Ex. S-6 at 5.

Company has calculated the Bad Debt Expense included in the Customer Accounting Expense based on net write-offs without giving consideration to the accrued provision.

The Company's methodology is a departure from the two established methodologies for treating uncollectible accounts.<sup>27</sup> The first method is the Direct Charge-Off method where uncollectibles and any associated, subsequent recoveries are recorded directly, or "charged-off," to Bad Debt Expense. The second method is the Allowance method where a company systematically records expense to Bad Debt Expense with an offset to an Allowance for Doubtful Accounts. Unlike the first method, under this method, the charge offs and any subsequent recoveries are then made to the Allowance for Doubtful Accounts rather than to Bad Debt Expense. In the instant case, the Company has adopted a kind of hybrid method whereby its charge-offs, as well as its systematic provision for bad debts, are both reflected in the Bad Debt Expense of Customer Accounting Expense. This practice has created confusion regarding the reasons for and the amounts of Bad Debt Expense.<sup>28</sup>

Staff would urge adoption of its adjustments for Bad Debt expense.

## B. Tank Maintenance Reserve (Sun City Water District).

The Company is requesting a tank maintenance reserve for its Sun City Water District. Staff agrees that well maintained tanks provide some long-term benefits for ratepayers.<sup>29</sup> Staff recommends that the Company be authorized to include the costs associated with tank maintenance as a normalized expense, rather than creating a "Tank Maintenance Reserve." <sup>30</sup> Staff recommends \$362,000 of normalized expenses be included.<sup>31</sup>

# C. Fuel and Power and Chemical Adjustment (Sun City Water District).

Sun City Water had water loss that was greater than what the Commission had adopted in the Sun City Water's last rate case.<sup>32</sup> As such, the cost of purchased power and fuel and chemicals used to pump and treat water above the accepted threshold of 10 percent represent a burden to ratepayers

McMurry Surrebuttal (Ex. S-6) at 5-8. McMurry Surrebuttal (Ex. S-6) at 8-9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Phase I, Tr. at 815:20-24.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Phase II,Tr. at 962:13-963:18.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> See Decision No. 70209.

and does not provide a benefit to ratepayers.<sup>33</sup> Staff recommended a similar adjustment for the Water 1 Utility of Greater Tonopah, in a pending docket for the rate application for the Global Water 2 3 utilities.<sup>34</sup> Recommended Opinion and Order was recently docketed and did not recommend against the 4 5 adjustment.35

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V. **COST OF CAPITAL.** 

In its application, the Company proposed a cost of capital of not less than 8.54 percent.<sup>36</sup> The Company stated that its cost of debt is 5.468 percent.<sup>37</sup> The requested capital structure was 45.15 percent equity and 58.85 percent debt, not including short-term debt.<sup>38</sup> The Company's initially proposed cost of equity is 12.25 percent.<sup>39</sup>

In that matter, the Global Water utilities accepted the Staff adjustment.

Staff proposed an overall rate of return of 7.2 percent.<sup>40</sup> Staff's recommended capital structure consists of 38.86 percent equity and 61.14 percent debt.<sup>41</sup> Staff's capital structure includes short-term debt consistent with the Commission's past treatment. 42 Staff recommends a cost of equity 10.7 percent, which includes a 0.8 percent upward adjustment to reflect a higher financial risk in the Company's overall capita structure compared to that of the sample companies used as Staff's proxies.43

Staff witness Juan Manrique testified that Staff used two market-based models to estimate the cost of equity: the Discounted Cash Flow model and the Capital Asset Pricing Model.<sup>44</sup>

In its Rebuttal testimony, Company witness Mr. Broderick accepted Staff's recommendations on cost of capital.<sup>45</sup> Staff's recommendations are reasonable and should be adopted.

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Becker Direct (Ex. S-9) at 31-32. 23

Direct Testimony of Crystal Brown at 22, Docket No. SW-020445A-09-0077 et al.

See Recommended Opinion and Order (Global Water Utilities, Docket No. SW-020445A-09-0077, et al. at 30-33. 24

Broderick Direct (Ex. A-6) at 8-10. 37

Id. 25

<sup>38</sup> Id.

<sup>39</sup> Id.

Manrique Direct (Ex. S-3)' at 10.

Id. at 14.

<sup>27</sup> See Decision No. 71410 at 41.

Manrique Direct at 10.

Manrique Direct (Ex. S-3) at 21; Tr. at 512:14-17.

Broderick Rebuttal (Ex. A-7) at 4; Tr. at 490:3-7.

### VI. OTHER ISSUES.

A. <u>Allocation of the Northwest Valley Regional Water Reclamation Facility between the Anthem/Agua Fria Wastewater District and the Sun City West Wastewater District.</u>

The Northwest Valley Regional Water Reclamation Facility ("Northwest Valley") treats wastewater flows from both the Anthem/Agua Fria Wastewater District and the Sun City West Wastewater District. In Decision No. 70209, the Company was ordered to allocate 68% of the Northwest Valley plant costs to the Sun City West Wastewater District. The Decision also ordered that the Sun City West Wastewater District's allocation of the Northwest Valley would be revisited in subsequent rate cases.

In Decision No. 70372, the Commission adopted Staff and the Company's recommendation that 32 percent of the Northwest Valley plant costs be allocated to the Anthem/Agua Fria Wastewater District.<sup>47</sup> The Commission indicated, however, that the allocation would be revisited in a future rate case.

For the current allocation, Staff is recommending that 28% be allocated to Anthem/Agua Fria Wastewater and 72 percent be allocated to Sun City West Wastewater. The Company and RUCO agree. The Anthem Community Council ("Council") disagrees, recommending that only 16.5 percent of the Northwest Valley plant costs be allocated to Anthem/Agua Fria.<sup>48</sup>

According to Staff witness Dorothy Hains, using linear regression analysis, the Sun City West Wastewater District could have approximately 15,055 customers by the end of 2013. In Staff's analysis, Staff used the actual growth numbers as well as projected growth. Staff anticipates rapid growth in the Northeast Agua Fria Area known as Corte Bella. Corte Bella lies within the Agua Fria Wastewater District but because it is physically close to the Northwest Valley plant, the Northwest Valley plant treats its flows. However, Staff could not perform linear regression analysis for the Corte Bella portion of the service area, because there were not enough data points, Staff only had growth numbers for 2007 and 2008.<sup>49</sup> For an established community like Sun City West, Staff had

<sup>27 46</sup> Decision No. 70209 at 5.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> Decision No. 70372 at 12.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> Neidlinger Surrebuttal (Ex. Anthem-3) at 6.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Phase I, Tr. at 793:15-16.

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sufficient data points, actual growth numbers for the years 2003-2008, to perform the linear regression analysis. Using this projected growth Staff estimates that in 2013 customers in the area service by Sun City West Wastewater will use 72 percent of the North Valley plant's treatment capacity and the remaining 28 percent of capacity will be needed to serve customers located in the Northeast Agua Fria Area ("NEAF").<sup>50</sup>

The Council's witness, Dan Neidlinger, asserts that Staff has made a material error in its growth calculation by using linear regression. Mr. Neidlinger states that Staff's projected 704 per year customer growth rate was based on the assumption that there were no customers in the NEAF service area at the end of 2004 and a 2816 customer increase over the five year period of 2005 through 2008. This is incorrect. According to Ms. Hains, Corte Bella was a new project and she did not think that in 2005 there were any residents in Corte Bella. Ms. Hains states that the estimated growth rate for Corte Bella is 554 connections for the years 2005-2008 and the estimated growth for Sun City West is 14 connections. Sun City West is 14 connections.

Council witness Neidlinger testified that he did not perform a linear regression analysis and asserts that Ms. Hains did not either.<sup>53</sup> While Ms. Hains did not perform a linear regression for the Corte Bella area, she did perform such an analysis for Sun City West. Further Mr. Neidlinger discounts the growth rates for 2005 and 2006 as being unrealistic and not representative of what is going to happen in the area in the future.<sup>54</sup>

Projecting growth is not an exact science. The Commission has accepted Staff's methods for estimating growth. Staff's growth projections are more reflective of future growth. The allocation recommended by Staff is reasonable and should be adopted.

# B. Glendale Interceptor (Sun City Wastewater District).

Company witness Miles Kiger requested that the Commission grant the Company an accounting order authorizing the deferral of capital improvement costs of \$917,000, the Company's proportionate share, related to the 99<sup>th</sup> Avenue Interceptor project under the Glendale Sewage

Hains Direct, Sun City West Wastewater Engineering Report Ex. S-7) at 5.

<sup>27 | 51</sup> Phase I, Tr. at 790:14-15.

Phase I, Hains Direct, Sun City West Wastewater Engineering Report (Ex. S-7) at 5, footnote 3.

<sup>28 | 53</sup> Phase I, Tr. at 872:12-16.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Phase I, Tr. at 873:2-10.

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Phase II, Tr. at 970-971.

Kiger Rebuttal (Ex. A-14) at 2.

Phase II, Tr. at 973.

Id. at 2-3.

Buls Direct (Ex. A-5) at 4 (adopted by Paul Townsley). Id.

Transportation Agreement.<sup>55</sup> The Company's rationale for requesting to defer these capital improvement costs is that they are similar to the costs included in rate components 3 and 4 of the Tolleson Agreement for which the Commission previously granted the Company an accounting order.56

Staff witness Gary McMurry testified that recording these costs as prescribed by the Uniform System of Accounts ("USOA") and Generally Accepted Accounting Principles ("GAAP") does not preclude the Company from cost recovery, i.e., capitalization provides for appropriate recovery of these costs and that deferral is unnecessary.<sup>57</sup> Mr. McMurry further testified that deferral of these costs is also inconsistent with the Commission's ultimate authorization of similar costs in a recent decision for the Company's Sun City Wastewater District.<sup>58</sup> Staff recommends denial of the Company's request. Staff further recommends inclusion of the replacement cost net of accumulated depreciation in rate base since this replacement was performed primarily before, but also during and shortly after the test year. The replacement cost should be depreciated using the authorized depreciation rate for the plant account in which the replacement costs are recorded.

#### C. Infrastructure Improvement Surcharge.

The Company has proposed an "Infrastructure Improvement Surcharge" for Sun City Water. The surcharge would be limited to the replacement of existing assets. The most common types of assets that would be covered would be replacement mains, hydrants, meters, services, tanks and booster stations.<sup>59</sup> Twice a year the Company would assess what assets were placed into service. Using the most recently approved return on equity, depreciation rates, cost of debt, capital structure and revenue gross up factors along with the estimated service life, the Company would calculate depreciation expense. The Company would also calculate an appropriate return on these assets.<sup>60</sup> The total amount of the surcharge would be the return on and of these qualifying assets. The total

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<sup>3</sup> Id. at 15-17. <sup>4</sup> Id. at 18-22.

Buls Direct (Ex. A-5) at 6.

Phase II, Tr. at 352:9-11.

Michlik Direct (Ex. S-15) at 9.

See generally Decision No. 66400.
 Decision No. 68302 at 45-46.

Phase II, Tr. at 433:20-25; 434:1.

amount of the surcharge would be calculated as a percentage of the base revenue requirement from the previous rate case.<sup>61</sup>

According to Mr. Townsley, this type of surcharge is used in other jurisdictions to replace aged infrastructure.<sup>62</sup> Mr. Townsley further testified that the NARUC water subcommittee has endorsed this type of surcharge as a regulatory best practice.<sup>63</sup> Mr. Townsley also testified that the surcharge would allow the Company to make prudent investments in replacing existing infrastructure so that crises that are seen in other jurisdictions can be avoided and customers would not be faced with large rate increases.<sup>64</sup>

Staff is opposed to the surcharge. As Staff witness Jeffrey Michlik testified, ordinary infrastructure improvements of the types contemplated by the Company should be handled in the normal fashion through the inclusion in a rate case. 65 Mr. Michlik further testified that the Company has not offered any reasons for its request of extraordinary treatment of ordinary improvements. 66

The Commission has approved surcharge mechanisms in circumstances such as the imposition of arsenic treatment standards by the Environmental Protection Agency and such compliance with the new federal standards would require significant investment by water companies.<sup>67</sup> The Commission has reserved the use of these adjustment mechanisms to extraordinary circumstances to mitigate the effect of uncontrollable price volatility or uncertainty in the market place.<sup>68</sup>

The Company has not demonstrated the extraordinary circumstances necessary to require the use of a surcharge. The Company admits that the surcharge would cover routine investments in such items as meters, mains, hydrants, service tanks and booster stations.<sup>69</sup> Although, Mr. Townsley testified that the amount of the improvements warrant such treatment, the Company could not say with certainty the amount that will be necessary to effect such improvements, although the Company

has proposed a 10 percent cap. 70 Staff would urge the rejection of the Infrastructure Improvement

Surcharge.

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Phase II, Tr. at 435:18-25, 436:1-5.

Hains Direct, Engineering Report for Agua Fria Wastewater (Ex. S-7) at 12. 27

Broderick Rebuttal (Ex. A-7) at 18.

Exhibit A-16, Docket No.WS-01303A-06-0403.

Id.

#### D. Facilities Hook Up Fee Tariff.

Staff made several revisions to the Company's hook up fee tariff for Anthem/Agua Fria Wastewater to include certain reporting requirements now required by the Commission and added additional lateral fees. 71 The Company accepted the modifications. 72

### VII. ANTHEM INFRASTRUCTURE AGREEMENT.

Prior to the commencement of the evidentiary hearing, the Council filed a pre-hearing memorandum alleging that the 1997 Agreement for the Villages at Desert Hills Water/Wastewater Agreement between the Company and Pulte Corporation ("Infrastructure Agreement" or "Anthem Agreement") constituted an evidence of indebtedness as contemplated by A.R.S. § 40-301 et seq. In the alternative, the Council argues that the Infrastructure Agreement is a main extension agreement as contemplated by A.A.C. R14-2-406. Because the Company failed to obtain Commission approval as required by A.R.S. § 40-302 and A.A.C. R14-2-406, the Council requests that the 2007 payment of \$3.1 million and the

2008 payment of \$20.2 million be excluded from rate base and receive no ratemaking recognition. For the reasons stated below, the Council has not alleged a legally sound basis upon which to alter the ratemaking treatment, which is in effect a request to disallow plant.

#### A. Background.

Under the Infrastructure Agreement, Pulte (formerly Del Webb) was to fund much of the water and wastewater infrastructure, and Arizona-American would eventually have to refund Del Webb's advanced funds in accordance with Exhibit B of the Agreement, with a large balloon payment when build-out occurred.<sup>73</sup> Only after projects were completed and refunds made to Pulte, did the plant become eligible for inclusion in rate base.<sup>74</sup>

In November and December of 2002, Arizona-American filed applications requesting rate adjustments for the ten districts owned by Arizona-American with the Commission. The districts for which applications were filed included Sun City West Water, Sun City West Wastewater, Sun City Water, Sun City Wastewater, Mohave Water, Havasu Water, Anthem Water, Agua Fria Water, Anthem/Agua Fria Wastewater, and Tubac Water. A refund payment was included in the rate filing.

There were several modifications to the Anthem Agreement over the course of build-out of Anthem. The first modification to the Anthem Agreement was a Letter Agreement entered into on November 24, 1998. In that Agreement, Del Webb (now Pulte) agreed in part to compensate Citizens for the additional costs and reduced revenues resulting from the Commission's initial Certificate of Convenience & Necessity ("CC&N") Order. In other words, Del Webb and Citizens (now Arizona-American) had (prior to hearing) entered into an agreement regarding rates and other matters. Because the terms of that agreement were not adopted in total, Del Webb agreed to provide additional compensation to Citizens in recognition of the difference between what had been agreed to by the Parties and what was eventually ordered by the Commission.

The second modification to the Anthem Agreement was by an Amendment ("First Amendment") dated May 8, 2000. The purpose of that Agreement was to include the Jacka Parcel as part of the Anthem Project.

The third modification to the Anthem Agreement (the "Second Amendment") was entered into on September 1, 2000. That Amendment revised the Capacity Reservation Section 3.2 of the Agreement and adjusted the ERU benchmarks due to the withdrawal of the Phoenix area and the addition of the Jacka Parcel. It also addressed the effect of the Phoenix Agreement. It addressed other matters as well; and contained a consent by Del Webb to the assignment by Citizens of their rights and obligations under the Agreement to Anthem.

On September 27, 2001, Citizens, Arizona-American, Del Webb and Anthem Arizona LLC entered into the Refund Coordination Agreement, which addressed the allocation of responsibilities between Citizens (including Treatco and Distco) and Arizona-American. It also adopted a new schedule for the calculation and allocation of refunds.

The fourth modification to the Anthem Agreement (the "Third Amendment") was entered into on December 12, 2002. That Amendment revised the acre feet allocation under the Ak-Chin Agreement and again recognized Arizona-American's substitution for Citizens in the Agreement.

The final modification to the Anthem Agreement (the "Fourth Amendment") was entered into on or about October 8, 2007. The Agreement was intended to address Commission concerns and the Company's financial circumstances by providing further rate relief to Anthem customers, utilizing the following measures:

- 1. Pulte agreed to delay the final true-up payment by approximately six (6) months;
- 2. Pulte agreed to reduce the total refundable developer advance by \$1.5 million; and
- 3. Pulte agreed to defer for two years, without interest, twenty-five percent (25%) of the true-up payment that would have been due upon build-out.

The Commission, in the Company's last case involving Anthem, found that it would revisit the issue of the reasonableness of the Company's agreement to refund to Pulte almost all of the cost required to construct Anthem's water infrastructure.<sup>75</sup>

# B. The Infrastructure Agreement is not Evidence of Indebtedness as Contemplated by A.R.S. § 40-301 et seq.

A.R.S. § 40-301(A) requires public service corporations to seek prior Commission approval before issuing stocks, bonds, notes or other evidence of indebtedness. The Council attempts to shoehorn the Infrastructure Agreement into the category of "evidence of indebtedness." The Council's attempt does not work.

A.R.S. § 40-301 is entitled "Issuance of stocks and bonds; authorized purposes." While headings are not law, <sup>76</sup> the title is indicative of the types of instruments the legislature intended to be governed by this provision. The Infrastructure Agreement is not a stock or bond, but an agreement that provides terms and conditions of service, as well as refund obligations. Taking the Council's interpretation of A.R.S. § 40-301 *et seq.* to its logical conclusion would mean that any contract that a utility enters into that requires the payment of money over a term would require prior Commission

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>75</sup> Decision No. 70372 at 43.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>76</sup> See A.R.S. § 1-212.

See Surrebuttal Testimony of Darron Carlson at 2, Docket No. WS-03454A-00-1022.
 Phase I, Tr. at 419-420.

<sup>9</sup> Decision No. 70372 at 36-43.

approval. One seriously doubts that the Legislature would require utilities to obtain prior approval for such things as contracts for office furniture or computer services.

# C. The Infrastructure Agreement Is Much More Than a Main Extension Agreement under A.A.C. R14-4-206?

The Council argues, apparently in the alternative, that if the Infrastructure Agreement is not "evidence of indebtedness," then it is a main extension agreement. The Commission has treated the Infrastructure Agreement somewhat like a main extension agreement, by treating the prior refund payments as advances. However, the Commission has never approved the Infrastructure Agreement, even though the Company has sought approval. Staff opined that the Infrastructure Agreement was an agreement between private parties that did not require Commission approval or denial.<sup>77</sup>

Under the Commission's Main Extension rules, if a utility does not obtain Commission approval, the remedy is to require a refund of all money advanced. Apparently, this is what has occurred between the Company and Pulte, although the Company disputes the assertion that it is refunding all of the money advanced to it by Pulte.<sup>78</sup> However, of significance, is the fact that the rules do not require the disallowance of plant, which in this case has been found to be used and useful. The Council's requested remedy is harsh, inequitable and should be disregarded.

As discussed above, the Company did seek Commission approval of the various agreements several times but because the agreements went well beyond the typical main extension agreement, the Commission did not approve what amounted to private agreements between the parties. It would be inequitable now to penalize the Company as the Council suggests for not obtaining approval of the agreements, when it had sought such approval on several occasions. In addition, such drastic action is not necessary since at the time that the original agreement came before the Commission for approval, the Commission appeared to recognize the novelty of the arrangement between Citizens and Pulte and left open the possibility of later scrutiny regarding the reasonableness of the arrangement, in particular the balloon payment.<sup>79</sup>

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VIII. RATE DESIGN ISSUES.

The most significant issue relating to rate design in this case is whether the Commission should approve some form of rate design consolidation in this case.

which question the reasonableness of the original build out projections and the agreement itself.

Staff witness Jeffrey M. Michlik presented Staff's recommendations on rate design for the five water and wastewater districts at issue in this case. Mr. Michlik also presented Staff's proposals on consolidation of the rate design for all or various districts of the Company.

It is Staff's position that all of the plant is used and useful and Staff has accordingly included

Staff witness Michlik recommends stand-alone rates for all of the districts in this case. 83 Staff does not support consolidation of the rate design for all or some of the Company's districts at this time.

A. The Commission Should Adopt Staff's Stand-Alone Rates for the Arizona American Water and Wastewater Districts in this Case.

There are no significant disputes between Staff, the Company and the other parties with respect to Staff's proposed rate design except with respect to Anthem Wastewater.

Michlik Direct (Ex. S-15) at 3.

<sup>27</sup> Phase I, Tr. at 285-286.

Ex. S-2 (Arizona-American Board of Directors minutes)

Ex. S-1 (Citizens Utilities – Villages at Desert Hills, proforma projections).

#### 1. Anthem Water District.

The present monthly minimum charges vary by meter size.<sup>84</sup> No gallons are included in the monthly minimum charge.<sup>85</sup> The Company currently has a three tier commodity rate structure for residential customers and proposes no change except to rate levels. 86 The breakpoints are 1) zero to 4,000 gallons (\$1.5400 per thousand gallons); 4,001 to 10,000 gallons (\$2.4100 per thousand gallons), and 3) over 10,000 gallons (\$3.08 per thousand gallons).<sup>87</sup> A two tier rate structure currently exists for larger residential, commercial, industrial and construction commodity rates which also vary by meter size 1) \$2.4100 per thousand gallons for the first tier and 2) \$3.0800 per thousand gallons for any consumption over the first tier. 88 There is also a commodity rate for irrigation and wholesale customers.

Staff and the Company's proposals with respect to rate design for the Anthem Water District are similar in that both maintain the monthly minimum rate structure by meter size with zero gallons included in the monthly minimum.<sup>89</sup> Both the Company and Staff's rate design proposals for the standard 5/8 x 3/4-inch and 3/4-inch residential customer contain a 3-tier inverted commodity rate structure although Staff has modified the breakpoints.<sup>90</sup> Staff has maintained the current two tier structure for commodity rates for larger residential, commercial and industrial customers; although the rate per thousand gallons has increased.<sup>91</sup>

The Council objects to several rate design changes of Staff including Staff's pricing of the higher tiers of the rate structure in relationship to pricing for the first tier. 92 The Council also objects to Staff's proposed changes in tier break points for the larger meter sizes because of the size of the increase that would result.<sup>93</sup> The Council appears to believe that since a cost of service study was not performed and filed in this case, that no changes in the breakpoints is appropriate.<sup>94</sup> Yet Mr.

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Michlik Direct (Ex. S-15) at 4.
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Id.

<sup>25</sup> 

<sup>26</sup> Michlik Direct (Ex. S-15) at 4-5.

<sup>27</sup> 

Neidlinger Direct (Ex. Anthem-18) at 6.

<sup>28</sup> 

Id.

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103 Id.

Neidlinger among others has acknowledged that rates are not set based upon cost of service studies alone; rather many factors go into the development of rates for any given service. 95

At the hearing, the ALJ asked Staff to prepare a stand-alone rate design for the Company's districts that used five tiers instead of three. Staff has included a five tier rate design as part of its final schedules.

Finally, Staff is recommending the elimination of the Capacity Reservation Charges CRC-1.96 There were no CRC-1 revenues in the test year and no significant change is forecasted.<sup>97</sup>

Much concern was expressed regarding the level of the rate increase for Anthem residents. Many parties have characterized the increase that would result from inclusion of the balloon payment in rate base as resulting in rate shock.<sup>98</sup> RUCO witness Moore recommended that, subject to the Company's agreement, the rates be phased in over a period of three years. 99 Mr. Moore conditioned this upon the Company's further agreement to forgo interest and/or lost revenue over this three year period. 100 Mr. Moore submitted a late filed exhibit showing rate levels when phased in over a three year period and the amount of revenue or interest that would have to be forgone over the three year period. 101 The Company has not agreed to forgo lost revenue or interest in conjunction with Mr. Moore's proposal.

#### 2. Anthem/Agua Fria Wastewater District.

The Company's Anthem/Agua Fria Wastewater District is the only wastewater district owned by the Company in Arizona that has a volumetric charge incorporated into its residential rate structure. The present monthly minimum charge for all residential customers is \$27.76 with a volumetric charge of \$3.4800 per 1, 000 gallons up to 7,000. For the commercial customers, the minimum charges and commodity charges vary by meter size. 103

Phase II, Tr. at 306:14-18.

Michlik Direct (Ex. S-15) at 9.

Michlik Direct (Ex. S-15) at 10.

Michlik Direct. (Ex. S-15) at 11. Michlik Direct (Ex. S-15) at 10.

Michlik Direct (Ex. S-15) at 11.

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Staff is recommending that the Company change its method of billing its residential customers for wastewater to the method currently used by some municipalities for wastewater service. Under this method, there would be no monthly minimum charges for residential customers, and only a volumetric charge per 1,000 gallons would be assessed. Under Staff's recommendation, the Company would bill each individual residential customer based on the customer's average water usage for the months of January, February, and March. The customer's billing would be reset every year based upon the customer's water usage for these three months at a rate of \$9.5966 per 1,000 gallons.

Staff proposed this new rate design because during the summer months, customers typically use more water for activities unrelated to the amount of wastewater used. Thus Staff believes that water usage during the winter months is a more accurate representation of the amount of wastewater being discharged from the customer's home year-round and results in a more appropriate basis for the charges. 109

Several parties including the Council and the Company oppose Staff's new rate design proposal. Mr. Neidlinger, on behalf of the Council, states that the Commission should reject the Staff's proposed change in wastewater rates for Anthem's residential customers because (1) winter lawns are a requirement in Anthem, and (2) a large percentage of the water use in the months of January through March is turf irrigation that never enters the wastewater collection system. While the specifics of the winter lawn requirement was filed in the docket, there was no demonstration that this requirement would increase the sewer bills of Anthem residents and to what extent.

The Council, on the other hand, recommends that residential customers be billed on a fixed monthly charge for wastewater services. But Staff believes that this would be a step backwards with respect to conservation since the current rate structure incorporates volumetric charges.

Michlik Direct (Ex. S-15) at 12.

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1d. at 12.

Michlik Direct at 11.

<sup>107</sup> Id. 108 Id.

*Id.* 

Neidlinger Direct at 4.

Finally, the same issues regarding potential rate shock raised with respect to the proposed increases for Anthem Water would also apply with respect to Anthem/Agua Fria Wastewater.

The Commission should adopt Staff's proposed rate design for Anthem Wastewater.

## 3. Sun City Water District.

The Company currently has monthly minimum charges by meter size.<sup>111</sup> Zero gallons are included in the monthly minimum charge.<sup>112</sup> The Company and Staff both proposed increases to the monthly minimum charges.<sup>113</sup> The current rate structure incorporates a three tier residential commodity rate structure for 5/8 x <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inch and <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> inch customer: (1) zero to 3,000 gallons (\$0.7190 per thousand gallons), (2) 3,001 gallons to 10,000 gallons (\$1.3290 per thousand gallons) and (3) over 10,000 gallons (\$1.6920 per thousand gallons). The Company as well as Staff propose maintenance of the 3 tier inverted commodity rate structure for residential customers with 5/8 x <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-inch and <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-inch meters, although Staff has modified the breakpoints of the tiers.<sup>114</sup> For other meter sizes, there would be two commodity rate tiers in the future as there are now.

At the hearing the ALJ requested that Staff submit a five tier rate structure for consideration as well in this case. Staff filed a five tier rate structure as part of its final schedules in this docket.

Staff is not aware of any disagreements with respect to its proposed rate design for Sun City Water.

# 4. Sun City Wastewater District.

Present monthly minimum charges vary by meter size.<sup>115</sup> There are no residential volumetric charges.<sup>116</sup> For single- and multi-unit commercial customers there are both volumetric and monthly minimum charges.<sup>117</sup> Both the Company and Staff have proposed increases to the various rates in its current rate structure but no change to the rate structure itself.<sup>118</sup>

<sup>111</sup> Michlik Direct (Ex. S-15) at 7.

*Id* 

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Michlik Direct (Ex. S-15) at 7.
Michlik Direct (Ex. S-15) at 8.

<sup>116</sup> Michlik Direct (Ex. S-15) at 12.

*Id.* 

Staff is not aware of any disputes regarding its proposed rate design for the Sun City Wastewater District.

## 5. Sun City West Wastewater District.

The present monthly minimum charges vary by meter size and there is no residential volumetric charge. The existing rate structure also incorporates monthly minimum charges and volumetric rates for single and multi-unit commercial customers and for other commercial meter sizes. The present monthly minimum charges and volumetric rates for single and multi-unit commercial customers and for other commercial meter sizes.

Staff and the Company propose increases to the various wastewater rates but no change to the current rate design structure. 121

Staff is not aware of any concerns regarding its proposed rate design for Sun City West Wastewater.

# B. Staff Complied With The Commission's Directive to Put Forth a Consolidated Rate Design for the Company.

In Decision No. 71410, the Commission ordered Staff to put forth at least one consolidated rate design for the Company. In response to the Commission's directive, the Staff witness Michlik put forward three different consolidation scenarios. The Staff used the Company's rate consolidation model to develop its various consolidated rate design scenarios. Staff performed various trials testing the formula links and calculations and found that the model itself was reliable. Staff's three consolidation proposals are as follows:

- 1) total consolidation of all of the Company's respective water and wastewater districts in Arizona;
- 2) consolidation of the Company's Sun City and Sun City West water and wastewater districts and all remaining districts under a separate consolidation proposal; and
- 3) consolidation of 1) Sun City and Sun City West water districts; 2) the Agua Fria, Anthem, and Paradise Valley water districts; and 3) the Tubac, Mohave, and Havasu water districts. <sup>125</sup>

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>119</sup> Michlik Direct (Ex. S-15) at 13.

 $<sup>26 \</sup>mid 120 \mid Id.$  at 15.

<sup>121</sup> Id

<sup>27 | 122</sup> Decision No. 71410 at 51.

 $<sup>^{123}</sup>$  Id.

 $<sup>28 \, |^{124} \,</sup> Id.$  at 16.

<sup>125</sup> Michlik Direct (Ex. S-15) at 17.

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<sup>126</sup> Abinah Direct (Ex. S-16) at 7. <sup>127</sup> *Id.* at 6-7.

Abinah Direct (Ex. S-16) at 4-5.
Phase II, Tr. at 1407:21-1408:1.

the rates of the rural or outlying systems (Mohave, Lake Havasu, and Tubac); the Maricopa County systems (Paradise Valley, Anthem, and Agua Fria, excluding the Sun Cities); and the Sun City and Sun City West systems.<sup>126</sup>

Staff witness Abinah noted that the third consolidation proposal discussed above consolidates

While the Company appears to favor statewide consolidation, the Staff is concerned by the Company's failure to put forth a rate consolidation proposal in its Direct Testimony. Because the Company did not put forward any direct case, it did not address many of the factors set forth in the testimony of Staff witness Abinah that should be considered with any consolidated rate design proposal. Mr. Abinah identified the following factors: (1) public health and safety; (2) proximity and location; (3) economies of scale/rate case expense; (4) price shock/mitigation; (5) public policy and (6) how other jurisdictions/municipalities are addressing the issue. 129

Staff is also concerned with the Company's failure to do any sort of quantifiable cost/benefit analysis. While Staff asked the Company in discovery to submit a cost/benefit analysis, Staff has not had an opportunity to review what the Company ultimately filed.

### IX. CONCLUSION.

Staff respectfully requests the Commission to adopt its recommendation in this proceeding. RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED this 16<sup>th</sup> day of July 2010.

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